

SUDAN CONFLICT Saudi ships yet to evacuate Bangladeshis

Around 700 in Port Sudan
camps since May 3

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Around 700 Bangladeshis, who were evacuated to Port Sudan from conflict-stricken Khartoum, have been waiting in camps for Saudi ships that are supposed to take them to Jeddah.

Speaking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, Muktar Hossain, a Bangladeshi now in Port Sudan, said, "We are anxious, worried and unsure about when the ships will be available to transport us."

He added that from May 2 onwards, nearly 700 Bangladeshis were taken to Port Sudan, around 800km from Khartoum, on 13 buses.

Since April 15, Khartoum has been witnessing intense conflicts between the Sudanese military and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Many foreign diplomats, UN officials and foreign nationals have already been evacuated, while others are in the process of being moved, as the clashes have killed over 550 people and injured some 5,000 others so far.

The Bangladesh embassy building and the residence of the ambassador in Khartoum had also come under attack, which prompted the authorities to evacuate the Bangladeshis.

There are some 1,500 Bangladeshis living in Sudan.

Muktar said the Bangladeshis in Port Sudan were living in camps, where food is served only twice a day and not enough toilet facilities are available. However, he said they have accepted the reality.

"No doubt we have escaped a dangerous situation in Khartoum, but who knows whether the conflict will reach Port Sudan. Our relatives are very worried about us. We want to return home at the soonest."

Asked what the Bangladesh embassy had told them regarding the ships, he said, "They told us that several schedules were made for the ships to come, but those were all cancelled."

Shah Mohammad Tanvir Monsur, director general (consular) at the foreign ministry, said the Bangladesh embassy in Sudan has been in continuous touch with the Saudi authorities regarding the availability of the ships.

"We hope the ships will be available soon."

After being taken to Jeddah, the Bangladeshi nationals will then be flown home on Biman Bangladesh flights. If necessary, the flights may also be chartered, foreign ministry officials said earlier.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talking to King Charles III, head of the Commonwealth, during a meeting of the Commonwealth heads of government at its secretariat in London on Friday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF YEASIN KABIR JOY

Repeal DSA, other oppressive laws 30 social, cultural bodies demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty social and cultural organisations yesterday demanded that the government abolish the Digital Security Act-2018 and other "anti people and repressive" laws.

Besides, the organisations demanded the withdrawal of all cases filed under the DSA and the release of people arrested under the law.

The organisations made the call during a protest rally under the banner "Protibadi Shamajik Sangskritik Shongothosomuh" in the capital's Shahbagh, read a press release.

Reading out a "declaration paper" on behalf of the organisations, Amit Ranjan Dey, general secretary of cultural organisation Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi, said by using the "undemocratic and repressive" DSA, the government one after another has been arresting journalists and freethinkers, generating fear to gag newspapers, and shrinking space for people's freedom of expression.

He said freethinkers and science-loving people were arrested and harassed at will in the name of "religious sentiment" and through this, communal forces were allowed to rise.

At the rally, speakers said the DSA is one of those laws which contradicts the core

spirit of the country's constitution.

People's freedom of speech and opinion have shrunk because of the law, they added.

They said the act has been "weaponised" to harass people from various professional backgrounds including media persons, teachers, students and artists as well as to suppress opposition views.

Such a repressive act cannot be in force in a sovereign and independent country, they added.

At the rally, the organisations also demanded that the government stop formulating a law that aims to curb workers' right to call a strike.

Besides, they called for government steps to control the price hike of daily essentials, keep it within people's purchase capacity, and punitive action against syndicates.

Moreover, they called for ensuring a favourable environment for cultural activities in the country.

Presided over by Udichi President Prof Badiur Rahman, the rally was addressed, among others, by noted lawyer Barrister ZI Khan Panna, and educationist Prof Tanzimuddin Khan.

The organisations also include Biborton Sangskritik Kendra, Gano Sangskriti Kendra, Sanghati Sangskriti Kendra, Samaj Anushilan Kendra, and Bangladesh Ganoshilpi Sangstha.

Ukraine shoots down hypersonic Russian missile for the first time

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian air defences shot down a Russian hypersonic missile for the first time during an attack on the capital Kyiv this week, the Air Force said yesterday, in a potentially major setback for the Kremlin's campaign of long-range air strikes.

The Kinzhal, which means "dagger" in Russian, is one of six "next generation" weapons unveiled by President Vladimir Putin in 2018 when the Russian leader boasted that it cannot be shot down by any of the world's air defence systems.

Ukrainian Air Force Commander Mykola Oleschuk said the Kh-47 Kinzhal had been shot down on Thursday night over the region outside Kyiv. The Air Force said it had been taken down by a US Patriot air defence system.

The U.S. Patriot system is one of an array of sophisticated air defence units supplied by the West to help Ukraine repel a months-long Russian campaign of air strikes that has targeted critical infrastructure, power facilities and other sites.

5 JCD men hurt after

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Shaikat denied the allegations.

"Our BCL activists were busy greeting admission seekers. We are not involved in the incident. However, we have been informed that two groups of JCD men locked in a clash over internal disputes," Shaikat said.

Asked, DU Proctor Prof Maksudur Rahman said they have been informed that an unexpected incident happened outside the campus.

"We are looking into it... We always ensure discipline on the campus."

The injured are DU unit JCD Senior Joint Secretary Mominul Islam Jisan, Joint Secretary Razu Ahmed, Organising Secretary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall Anik Ahmed, Joint Secretary of Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall Abdullah Talukder Sabbir and Sir AF Rahman Hall leader Arifur Rahman.

Law being amended

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Asked about the settlement of the case in the Appellate Division after the party's registration was cancelled by the High Court, as it was contradictory to the constitution, the minister declined to comment.

The minister was speaking at the inauguration of a refresher course for senior assistant judges yesterday. He emphasised the importance of respecting judicial decisions and upholding judicial discipline. He stated that judgments made by the Appellate Division are considered law and must be protected.

"What I wanted to say [at the workshop] is that these judgments should always be respected and not contradicted, that is called judicial discipline. That must be protected," he said.

On the cusp of finding a new gas field Charles III is crowned

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"We need more and more exploration so that we can save millions of dollars by reducing LNG purchases."

In 2022, Bapex took a two-year initiative to drill at least 46 wells. In Bhola, it drilled three wells and found gas in all of them.

Maqbul E Elahi Chowdhury, a former director at Petrobangla, said, "The gas field [Ilisha] may produce around 30 million cubic feet a day. However, the country needs 3,000 million cubic feet a day."

Since Bhola is an island, supplying gas from there to the national grid

remains a major challenge, he said.

"We need a feasibility study by a competent third party to see whether investing in a pipeline from Bhola would be worthwhile."

Prof Anwar Hossain Bhuiyan of Dhaka University said although gas has been found in the Shahbazpur and Bhola North fields, and the Ilisha-1 well, the latter is an isolated field.

Between 2.5 and 5 million years ago, river sediments separated Ilisha from the Bhola North field. Gas has been found in Ilisha well at a layer deeper than that of Shahbazpur and

Bhola North fields, he told The Daily Star.

The Togbi-1 well, which was drilled to explore gas, was later proved to be part of the Shahbazpur field, he said.

"This time, the picture is different." It has been confirmed by 3D seismic data that a channel filled with rocks predominantly made up of silt and clay separated the Ilisha field from Bhola north from west and northeast, he added.

"We have to pay millions of dollars to import liquified natural gas from abroad. If you consider the current situation, this discovery is big news."

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Not everyone joined in the celebration, however.

Shortly before the coronation, London police arrested dozens of protesters using new powers rushed onto the statute book to crack down on direct action groups.

The anti-monarchy movement Republic – which wants an elected head of state – said six of its organisers were detained, while climate activists Just Stop Oil said 19 of its number were held.

Nevertheless, dozens of Republic activists held aloft banners on the route of the procession route, declaring: "Not My King."

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other campaign groups condemned the arrests. "This is something you would expect to see in Moscow, not London," HRW said.

The Metropolitan Police deployed

some 11,500 officers for one of its biggest ever security operations.

The force had warned that it would have an "extremely low threshold" for protests, and controversially planned to use mass facial recognition technology to monitor the crowds.

As well as being the first coronation since that of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, it was the first of a king since 1937. It was only the second to be televised and the first in colour and streamed online.

Much of the Anglican service, in which Charles pledged "I come not to be served but to serve", would have been recognisable to the 39 other monarchs crowned at Westminster Abbey since William the Conqueror in 1066.

But while many of the intricate rituals and ceremony to inrogate Charles as his people's "undoubted king" remained, the sovereign sought to bring other aspects of the service up to date.

Sunak calls Hasina

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achievement of a high economic growth before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, the envoy said.

The UK premier said he has been following the Bangladesh PM for many years.

"You are such a successful economic leader," Muna quoted Sunak as saying.

She said Sunak considers Hasina a role model.

The high commissioner said political, diplomatic and economic relations between Dhaka and London are excellent and the relationship is based on mutual trust.

Muna said heads of state and government from 130 countries went to the UK to attend the King's coronation.

"Rishi Sunak has held bilateral meetings with only seven of those heads of state and government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was among them. This is very important diplomatically and politically," she added.

Hasina briefed the British leader

about her government's Ashrayan project under which seven lakh families have so far got homes along with land.

Sunak highly praised the project. The two PMs discussed various bilateral and regional issues, including business relation and Rohingya.

Sunak mentioned that Bangladesh is bearing this huge burden of Rohingya, and Britain understands that it is a big problem.

Hasina thanked the British premier and its people for their support to the Rohingya issue. She also said that Rohingya have become a big security threat.

She invited Sunak to visit Bangladesh to see the condition of the Rohingyas.

The premier said British companies should make bigger investment in Bangladesh.

She congratulated Sunak on becoming the first British prime minister of Asian origin at such a young age.

Retired army officer killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A retired army officer was killed in a road crash on Dhaka-Tangail highway near Pakulla Bus Stand in Tangail's Mirzapur yesterday.

The dead is Nurul Islam, 75, of Elasin union in Delduar upazila, said police.

A Dhaka-bound bus crashed him under its wheels around 7:00am, said Mollah Tutul, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police Station.

The body was handed over to his family members, he added.

Pakulla Bus Stand is an accident-prone area where over a hundred people were killed in road crashes in the last several years, said locals.

According to locals, they have been demanding for an underpass or a foot over-bridge on the spot for long but the authorities did not pay heed to it.

Six gamblers sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A mobile court in Lalmonirhat's Aditumari yesterday awarded six gamblers with seven-day imprisonment.

Rawjatul Jannat, executive magistrate and assistant commissioner (land) of Aditumari upazila, delivered the verdict.

The court also fined them Tk 100 each.

The convicts are Mizanur Rahman, 40, Alam Mia, 30, Shahidul Islam, 35, Mozammel Haque, 51, Maminur Islam, 35, and Ekramul Haque, 35, of Purbo Dighaltari village in the upazila.

They were sent to Lalmonirhat District Jail, said Mozammel Haque, officer in charge of Aditumari Police Station.

Man sued over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man was sued yesterday over the rape of a minor girl in Jhalakathi's Rajapur on Friday.

The victim's father filed a case against Sakib, 22, with Rajapur Police Station, said Sanjeeb Kumar Pahlan, sub-inspector of the police station.

According to the case statement, the accused forcibly took the girl to a bush and raped her around 7:00pm on Friday.

A court recorded the victim's statement yesterday and medical tests were conducted on her, the SI said.

The accused went into hiding. Police were trying to arrest him within the shortest possible time, he further said.

Fake doctor sent to jail, clinic sealed off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A mobile court yesterday sentenced a fake doctor to two-year imprisonment in Thakurgaon town.

The convict is Shariful Islam, 39, of South 24 Parganas district in India's West Bengal, he claimed.

Mohammad Samsuzzaman, executive magistrate and assistant commissioner, led the mobile court. The court also fined the convict Tk 1 lakh. Shariful's clinic named "Amader Hospital" was also sealed off.

According to sources, he had been treating patients at the clinic for the last few months.

On information, the mobile court, comprising of officials of local health department, police and ansar personnel, conducted a drive at the clinic and found anomalies.